



# PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE



Empowering churches to proclaim the reconciling love of Christ.

## A Message from PCC

**April 21, 2021**

Members and friends of Penn Central Conference -

*"Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Genesis 28:15-17*

This scripture passage has always intrigued me. Jacob was blessed by his father after he intentionally stole his brother Esau's birthright as first born. He deceived Isaac and was blessed by him anyway. And this scoundrel was then blessed by God and promised presence and progeny. It has intrigued me because it really underscores the mystery of a God who chooses despite villainous acts (David is a good example). This is a God who unconditionally accepts someone no matter what they've done or have failed to do—and has purposes way beyond what a person could imagine. (Jesus' apostles never understood his message and Peter denied him. Yet God chose them to be leaders of the nascent church).

And I wonder what implications that has for me, for any of us, as we travel through our life journey; sometimes walking clearly, sometimes stumbling horribly. And I, any of us, can be in awe of how God is with us, blessing us, loving us unconditionally and having great intentions for our mission and ministry no matter who we are or what we've done or failed to do---lay and clergy.

A couple of weeks ago I had the deeply blessed opportunity to spend one week in silent retreat, accompanied by a spiritual director. I went in with all the baggage of "shoulda, coulda, woulda",

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## Outdoor Ministries

**In partnership with Lutheran Camping Corporation**

**Summer Camp: REGISTER ANYTIME!**

The 2021 summer camp schedule is set! There are camps for all ages and interests at both Kirchenwald and Nawakwa. Check out what is offered online.

PCC is covering half of camp registration for members! To learn more email

Anne Rankin at [annerankin524@gmail.com](mailto:annerankin524@gmail.com) or Paul at [pkeller@pccucc.org](mailto:pkeller@pccucc.org)

**Summer Staff Recruitment -- GOING ON NOW!**

Calling all high school kids, college-age young adults, and adults interested in working at

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## Prayers for Penn Central Conference

**Ephesians 6:18 (NLT)**

*Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

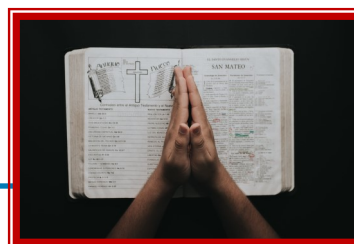
This week, we pray for each other as we continue to live into God's calling...

**New Hope UCC, Landisburg**

**Grace UCC, Lebanon**

**Hill UCC, Lebanon**

**St. Marks UCC, Lebanon**



## Message from the Conference cont'

wondering if God would show up for me and how—with arms open wide—or, in my overly critical conscience, with a finger wagging of all I've failed to do. I hoped that God would show me all God has planned for me going into the future, especially in my call as Associate Conference Minister.

Much to my surprise and chagrined humility, God came to me, not with finger wags for where I had zigged where I clearly needed to zag; not with a list of all the ministry God has for me to do—but with a quiet, sure presence that beckoned me into the deep mystery of the eternal—to that thin place where heaven and earth meet. And I experienced what Jacob may have experienced: “surely the Lord is in this place—and I didn't know it.”

Of course, I kind of expected God to show up at a retreat, as God has always shown up on retreats. But I didn't expect God to show up in an ineffable, indescribable place that only my spiritual director was able to witness. As I prayed and received, as I walked their labyrinth and observed their herd of deer just 50 feet from where I sat; as I pondered the pond where a goose and gander were nesting; as I walked the grounds of creation with spring flowers and flowering trees; I truly felt, truly knew that God is in this place—and I didn't know God would come to me in this way. And I, like Jacob, thought to myself: how awesome is this place, none other than the house of God, and this the gate of heaven.

I wish for each of us, for all of us, to have the time and space to experience a week of retreat. I truly believe it took that long for me to allow God to come to me as God wished to come to me, without all my expectations and assumptions. I wish for all of you every day to have “aha” moments of “God is here and I didn't even know it.” I pray that each one can experience moments of the thin places where heaven and earth meet—where you are standing in the house of God, at the gateway to heaven.

### Blessing upon blessing,

#### Marisa Laviola

Associate Conference Minister  
Penn Central Conference



## Outdoor Ministries cont'

camp this summer! Lutheran Camping Corporation is recruiting now for this summer's camp season.

**Earth Day Celebration at Kirchenwald** April 25  
Enjoy an afternoon of environmental activities, games, and crafts at one of your favorites places within God's creation: CAMP! An evening meal is included in the \$10 fee. All ages welcome.

**Men's Retreat at Kirchenwald** April 30 - May 1  
Need a weekend with the guys? Come on out to Kirchenwald for a retreat that's sure to put hair on your chest. \$85

Learn more here: <https://pccucc.org/outdoor-ministry/>

## Free Book

Brooks Berndt's new book "Cathedral on Fire - A Church Handbook For the Climate Crisis" is on it's second printing. He is giving away copies of the first printing while supplies last! Order the book on [uccresources.com](http://uccresources.com) and use code 2020FREE when it asks for a promo code.

## Contact us!

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